

— SITE NUMBER: WA-II-602

ADDRESS: 114 South Mechanic Street, Sharpsburg, MD

OWNER/LOT NUMBER/ACCESS: American Legion Antietam Post 236,  
846/1066, private

BUILDING DATE: mid 19th century

*South Mechanic Street*

114 ~~East Main Street~~ is an east-facing, horizontally massed, asymmetrical, one-and-a-half-story, frame, freestanding, residential structure with a one-story log wing. The building is set directly at the public-right-of-way, on a corner lot. It is unusual in that it is one of the only board-and-batten structures in the town (although it should be noted that a portion of the rear wing and the entire rear facade of the main structure are covered with corrugated metal siding). The building appears to have been built in several stages as there are three distinct parts to it: 1) the rear, log wing with its massive brick and stone composite chimney; 2) the north half of the building which is of log construction and has a lower roof ridge than the 3) south half of the building. The two halves of the main block are joined by a common eave line and common sheathing on the front and side facades. The standing-seam metal, side-gable roof has two brick chimneys, open eaves and gable returns. There are two entrances, one in the southern half of the building, the other straddling the two halves. The southern entrance consists of a six-panel door with a four-light transom above. The other door has a 12-light panel. Windows are irregularly placed. Those on the first floor of the south addition are single, rectangular, double-hung, nine-over-six and nine-over-one sash. In the north section, the front facade windows are paired, six-over-one. The attic windows are six-over-three. A hipped-roof, open porch extends across the face

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of the building from the north entrance to the window immediately to its south. It was supported by Tuscan columns and pilasters, however, one column is missing. The rear of the property has four outbuildings including an outhouse, shed, and smokehouse(?).

A building of the same configuration is noted on the 1877 map of the town as being owned by J. Hill. The 1922 Sanborn notes the building as a two-story dwelling (103 South Mechanic) and shows the one-story rear wing and a one-story outbuilding located directly at the street edge (Antietam Street). The buildings are currently vacant.

The building is within the Western Maryland Geographic Organization, the Development Period of Agricultural-Industrial Transition, and falls within the Historic Period Theme of Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Community Planning.

Prepared by Julie Mueller, June 1991

# Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF  
HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Survey No. WA-II-602  
Magi No. WA-II-724  
DOE   yes   no

## 1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic

and/or common House on South Mechanic Street

## 2. Location

street & number 116 South Mechanic Street    not for publication

city, town Sharpsburg    vicinity of    congressional district   

state Maryland    county Washington   

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<u>  </u> district	<u>  </u> public	<u>  </u> occupied	<u>  </u> agriculture <u>  </u> museum
<u>  </u> building(s)	<u>  </u> private	<u>  </u> unoccupied	<u>  </u> commercial <u>  </u> park
<u>  </u> structure	<u>  </u> both	<u>  </u> work in progress	<u>  </u> educational <u>  </u> private residence
<u>  </u> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<u>  </u> entertainment <u>  </u> religious
<u>  </u> object	<u>  </u> in process	<u>  </u> yes: restricted	<u>  </u> government <u>  </u> scientific
	<u>  </u> being considered	<u>  </u> yes: unrestricted	<u>  </u> industrial <u>  </u> transportation
	<u>  </u> not applicable	<u>  </u> no	<u>  </u> military <u>  </u> other:

## 4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name

street & number    telephone no.:   

city, town    state and zip code   

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.    liber   

street & number    folio   

city, town    state   

## 6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date    federal    state    county    local   

repository for survey records   

city, town    state

## 7. Description

Survey No. ~~WA-II-724~~

WA-II-602

### Condition

☐ excellent  
☐ good  
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated  
☐ ruins  
☐ unexposed

### Check one

☐ unaltered  
☐ altered

### Check one

☐ original site  
☐ moved      date of move \_\_\_\_\_

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

See accompanied Field Report prepared by Orlando Ridout V, Peter E. Kurtze, and Al Luckenbach dated 13 November 1987.

## 8. Significance

Survey No. ~~WA-II-724~~ *WA-II-602*

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

### Specific dates

### Builder/Architect

check: Applicable Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D  
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☐ state ☐ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

See accompanied Field Report prepared by Orlando Ridout V, Peter E. Kurtze, and Al Luckenbach dated 13 November 1987.



13 November 1987

## Field Report

House on South Mechanic Street, Sharpsburg, MD.

Prepared by: Orlando Ridout V, Peter E. Kurtze, Al Luckenbach

The board-and batten house on the northwest corner of South Mechanic and Antietam streets in Sharpsburg is a log and frame dwelling that has grown through a complex series of changes, almost all dating to the mid-19th century or earlier.

The earliest part of the house is to the north and consists of a single hewn log pen that is two bays wide and a true one-and-one-half stories high, with V-notched corner construction and Federal period trim. A second, slightly larger log pen is sited to the south, separated by a stair passage constructed with heavy timber framing and brick in-fill. The south pen is also of hewn log, two bays wide and a true story-and-a-half, but is two rooms deep and constructed with half-dovetail corner notching. A one-story log kitchen wing projects from the rear or west wall of the south log pen, and a later porch is constructed against the north wall of the rear wing.

Evidence for the dating and sequence of construction is complex and in some cases difficult to interpret. The north end of the house retains much original fabric, including the basic log structure with gable end chimney, pitched gable roof and interior trim.

The roof is constructed with hand-wrought "rosehead" nails and extends beyond the log pen to the south to cover the central stair passage as well. A close examination of this roof structure reveals that the rafters were originally exposed to view on the second floor interior, were joined together with pegged mortise-and-tenon joints and were reinforced with half-dovetailed collar beams. These rafters are notched over a heavy top plate and have shaped ends which are still visible in the unboxed eaves. The early shingle nailers survive in place on the east slope of the roof (they have been repositioned on the west slope) and are widely spaced, indicating the original covering consisted of side-lap shingles, remnants of which were found in the attic.

Original interior trim includes beaded baseboard and two-piece chairrail, beaded architrave with an ovolo and fillet backband, and one mantel with Federal period details.

Dating evidence for this section of the building is somewhat contradictory. The V-notched log construction is typical of this region in the 18th and 19th centuries. The wrought nails found in the roof construction suggest a date of circa 1815 or earlier; the Federal period trim is typical of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Taken together, this evidence suggests a date range of circa 1790 to 1815. Conversely, fallen plaster in the principal first floor room reveals riven plaster lath secured with machine made nails. This appears to be original lathing and plaster, and the nails seem no earlier than circa 1815 and could be as much as two decades later.

Trim nails from the Federal backband in this room are relatively delicate L-heads, and also appear to be machine-made. On the basis of this combination of evidence, a tentative date of circa 1810s to 1820s seems likely.

Of equal significance is the question of the relationship between this north pen and the passage and south pen. In its present form it closely resembles a double pen log house of the "dogtrot" plan, in which a pair of log pens flank an open passage, with the roof continuous across the entire structure. In this case, however, the two log pens are of unequal size, have different corner notching, and mis-matched roofs. The roof of the north pen does extend over the passage on continuous top plates, but ends abruptly at the juncture with the south pen.

A possible explanation for this unusual relationship of parts may be found in the evidence of fire damage in the original section of roof. The rafters and original shingle nailers are blackened and though they do not show significant charring, have almost certainly experienced fire damage and not just blackening from heavy domestic use. Two details are especially important. First, the fire evidently occurred after one major alteration had occurred. The roof collars had already been removed and a vertical board partition had been installed between the north and center rooms of the second floor, extending up to the peak of the roof. Both the partition and the empty collar sockets show evidence of fire damage. Second, floor joists in the larger south pen also show the same blackening, which argues against the easiest explanation — that the south pen had burned and been replaced with a slightly larger pen. Of equal interest is the evidence that the charred roof frame and the floor joists were left exposed but whitewashed after the fire.

Two additional pieces of evidence offer some potential for clarification. First, the roof over the south pen is later than any other structural part of the building. Constructed with machine sawn scantling, reused framing material, and fully-mature machine nails, the roof is framed with mitred and nailed rafter pairs, a detail rarely found before the Civil War. Second, the house is known to have sustained damage from at least one Union artillery shell during the Battle of Antietam in 1862, and the shell fragments are said to remain embedded in the south gable of the south pen. Further research of the war claims records at the National Archives could potentially provide a detailed description of the damage sustained and repairs required. For the time being, it may be postulated that the south roof and the board-and-batten exterior sheathing date to the post-battle period and may be related to a combination of necessary repairs and an effort to unify the complex collection of parts that comprised the house by mid-century.

It should also be noted that a renovation was undertaken in the early 20th century, which introduced a new stair, trim in the south pen, and considerable plaster work.

A second interpretation for the building might be inferred from three factors that remain puzzling and could be viewed as contradicting the assumption that the north pen is the earliest section. First, the half-dovetail notching found in the south pen is generally found in this region in structures dating to the 18th century. Second, a small stone cellar under the rear or west portion of the south pen originally had a bulkhead cellar entrance in the north wall, which would place the cellar entrance in the passage. Though examples of dog-trot houses with cellar entrances located

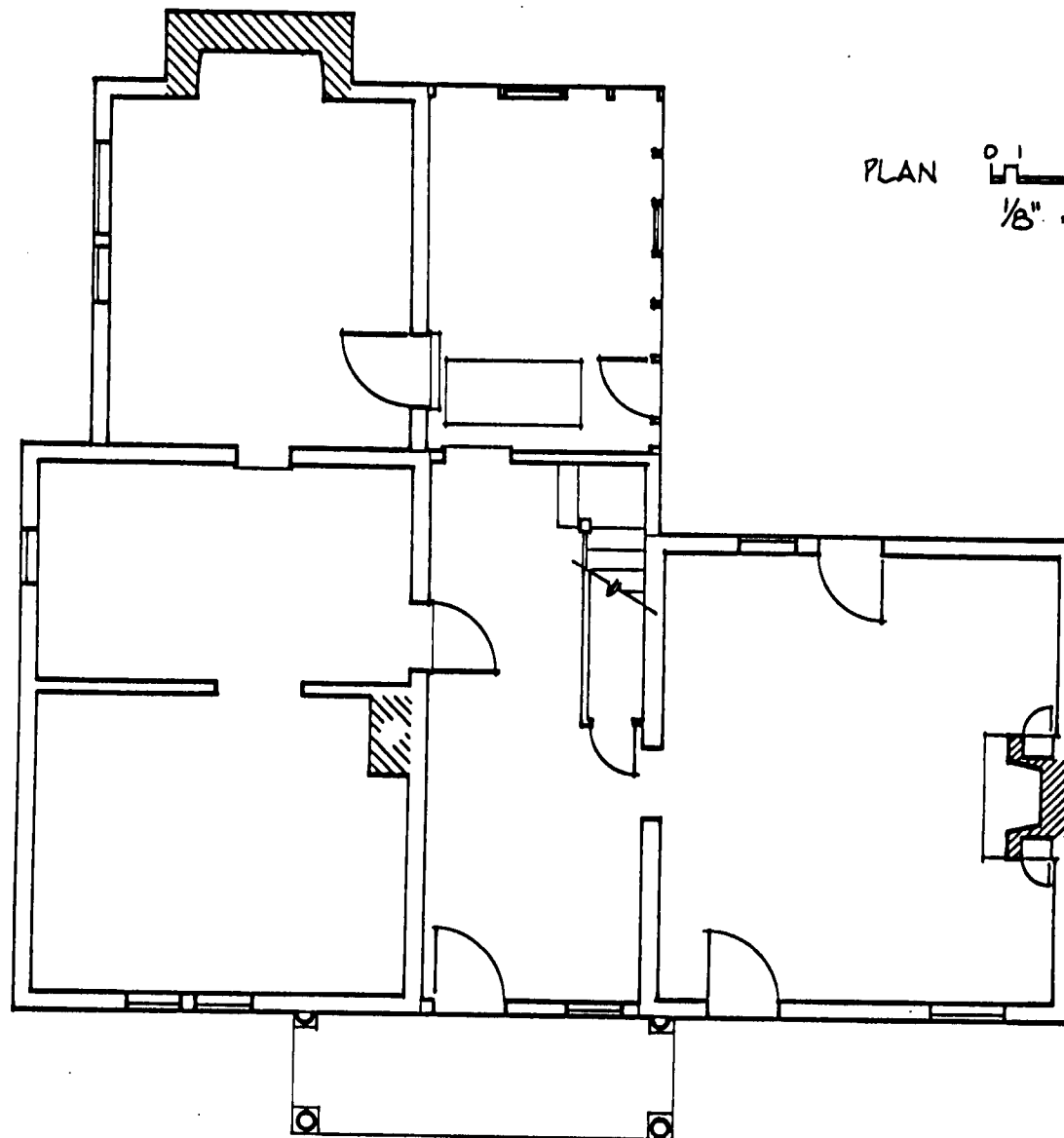


in the passage have been recorded in this region, it is equally likely that this is evidence that the south pen predates the passage. Finally, a careful inspection of the roof, particularly above the passage, revealed numerous reused oak floorboards with hand-wrought nails, a feature that is generally associated with 18th century buildings in Western Maryland.

Individually, none of these features is conclusive. The floorboards could be from another unrelated structure, and both the oak flooring and dovetail notching could simply be unusually late examples. Together, however, they serve as a warning that more detailed analysis would be required to better understand the precise history of this building. In particular, it would be useful to compare boring samples of the wall logs from both pens to see if a sequential relationship could be established. Documentary research would be equally revealing — a full chain of title would allow a search of the Civil War damage claim records and tax and probate records.

The use of the property might prove significant as well. The position of the building on the south edge of Sharpsburg on the Harper's Ferry Road suggests the possibility that it may have served commercial as well as domestic functions, an activity more consistent with the three doors that once pierced the primary facade.

The uncertainty regarding the precise origin, development, and function of this complex building underscores rather than diminishes its importance. The house can certainly be identified as an early 19th century building with a Federal period interior, and could well incorporate an earlier section dating to the late 18th century. The house exemplifies a double pen, through passage form that is relatively rare in Maryland and presents a particularly rare example of unmatched pens and asymmetrical plan. Much of the early fabric and detail survives and the board-and-batten siding is thought to be directly related to damage sustained in the nationally significant Battle of Antietam. Further, the location on the old Harper's Ferry Road suggests a possible commercial history for the building and the prominent corner site makes it an especially important part of the historic fabric of Sharpsburg.



MEASURED BY PETER KURTZE, ORLANDO RIDOUT V AND AL LUCKENBACH.

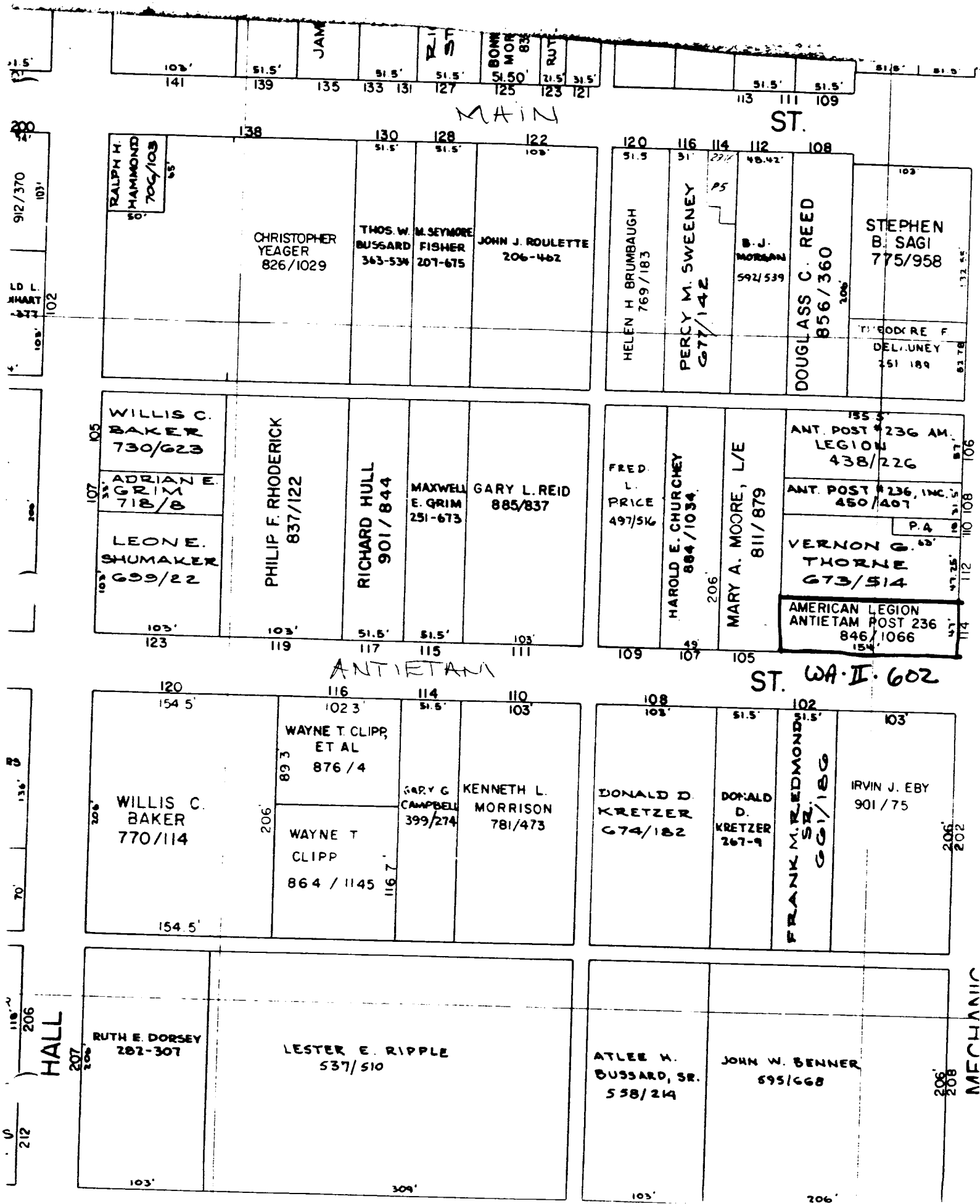
DRAWN BY PETER KURTZE AND NANCY KURTZ.

HOUSE ON SOUTH MECHANIC STREET  
SHARPSBURG, MARYLAND



Maryland Historical Trust  
Shaw House, 21 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

WA-11-724- WA-11-602





WA-TI-602

114 S. MECHANIC, SHARPSBURG, MD.

APRIL 1991

P. SACKETT CHRISTIAN

looking NW



WA-II-602

114 S. MECHANIC, SHARPSBURG, MD.

APRIL 1991

P. SACKETT CHRISTMAN

COOLING NE